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ABSTRACT

The basic components of the basic writing program at Rutgers University, designed to prepare disadvantaged students for the core course in English, are a combination of reading and writing activities with as much individualized instruction as possible. The components include three courses, a learning center, and an annual workshop in the teaching of reading and writing in college. Two of the three courses comprise a year-long, two-credit sequence of modules on "self" that integrate reading and writing instruction to promote college level study skills. If students do not pass a placement exam for the regular English course after completing this sequence, they are referred to the third course, one semester of noncredit work in developmental reading and expository writing designed to help them pass the placement exam. The learning center provides individualized instruction for participants in these developmental courses and for other students who recognize the need to improve their reading, writing, and study skills. The annual workshop is a forum for the interchange of teaching ideas, the preparation of new teachers, and continuous staff development. Expectations are high for the continued success of this program and its services to the students. (The paper includes excerpts from one of the course syllabi and lists suggested teaching methods.) (RL)

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# A BASIC WRITING PROGRAM IN A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE

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# PROLOGUE

Those writing teachers whose careers span three decades have a fascinating vantage point in these last years of the seventies. The differences between the ways we are now free to work and the ways we worked in the fifties are absolutely stunning. I started to teach freshman composition during those years and I think I did not differ substantially in attitude from most of my colleagues. We were role-conscious: the teacher's position in front of the classroom was immutable and it did not occur to us that students can learn from each other. We were grammarians: even though some of us first learned rules and terminology (which we accepted as gospel) when we started to teach, we felt that we had to know all these things and teach them. We did not think students came to us with any knowledge of grammar at all. Their fluency in speech counted for nothing. We were rigid in our expectations: if students did not learn grammar by exposure to the rules and use it correctly, they were at fault. Of course we realized that some teachers were better than others, but our underlying attitude was that students whose writing did not become entirely acceptable in our classes were either willfully perverse or stupid. Does this seem a harsh indictment? I'm afraid it is accurate. Oddly (or so it seems now) many of us thought of ourselves as educational liberals trying to free our students from the shackles that had weighed us down at their age. Unfortunately,

dropping the stricture against prepositions at the ends of sentences is about as far as our liberality went and some of us didn't even do that.

But look at us now in the seventies. Even the middle-aged like myself have come down from the teaching podium and started moving from group to group of students who are cheerily teaching each other in classrooms that are humming. We have dropped terminology and confidently ignore many of the traditional rules, teaching grammar in new ways and building on all that students already know. We recognize that students learn from each other sometimes better than from us and we use that information. Most important, we now have become searchers for new ways to achieve old goals.

What happened to us? The sixties happened to us. It remains for the sociologists, and the social historians and the psychologists to make sense of the sixties ultimately, but I know what I saw. More importantly, I know what I experienced. Of course at the time I knew neither, and even now many of the complexities, the eddies and the apparent regressions in the process of change remain obscure. But I can now look back and re-experience my trip through that decade. It <u>was</u> a trip -- in the slang meaning of that term. Metaphorically, it was shooting rapids -- not rocky enough to be really dangerous or frightening, but rapids that turn you and twist you and bump you and give you little rest between.

We have come to the end of this turbulence and those who experienced it never want to return to the stagnancy of

the fifties. (Well perhaps some do, but one must pity them, charitably.) The sharp excitements of discovery in teaching have been, not dulled, but rounded off. We have quietly dropped some of the more extravagant innovations and even resurrected some of our antique methods. (All true fogeys see the connection between sentence diagramming and sector analysis and have had a few chuckles in watching young beavers contemptously rejecting the former while blithely embracing the latter.) Some maintain that we have simply grown old, not wise, have been tempted by tenure pottage and given up most of the true gains of the sixties. This may be true in the whole area of social and economic progress, but is it true, too, in education? I maintain that it isn't, at least in my small area -- basic writing. It seems to me that instruction in basic writing, which only began on a large scale in the sixties, has not aged so much as it has matured, moving into the professional mainstream with a body of expertise of which we can be very justly proud. We had been out of the mainstream and our egos suffered. We have displayed all the symptoms of profound inferiority feelings -- self-imposed isolation, contempt for scholarship, dissociation from formal research. I maintain that these symptoms were a product of our ambiguous, ambivalent role in the sixties and that we can and are out-growing them. And we are using what we learned from our wild experimentation in programs that are not sober-sided, but grown up.

I would like to describe the writing program in which I now work with a side glance at the program in which I ex-

perienced the sixties. I am one of the fortunate, rare people who regularly. continuously enjoy their jobs and so I suppose I could be charged with prejudice in commenting on the quality of some of the things we are doing at Rutgers-Newark. Caveat emptor. But as I watch the movement of students through our courses, I know in my bones that we are doing something right.

## THE HISTORY AND THE CONTEXT

My program began in 1969. It was one of the many specially funded programs of the time (The Educational Opportunity Fund Program), designed to recruit the "non-traditional" college student -- minority group members who would formerly have had no expectations of going to college. Criteria were educational and/or financial disadvantage. There were no racial quotas, but the population was and remains primarily black. The original components were English, mathematics, science, social studies and counseling. Social science was soon dropped, but the others have grown in size or scope and, for the most part, in acceptance by the College.

The English component started as one course which had to be all things to all men. Since most of our students were not ready for English 101, we had to prepare them for that. Even in the sixties, Rutgers-Newark never gave up its English composition requirement. The one course developed in our special program in 1969 grew to eight -- a sequence of four ESL courses, a sequence of three courses for native speakers, and one course for both groups which was a corequisite for English 101. This last, which was an attempt to teach research techniques, was forced out by the budget, but its demise was accompanied by assurances from the English Department that they would put new life into their teaching of the research paper; this has proved healthy. This event (1974) was the first overt recognition I perceived in the year I had been there that there had to be some organic

connection between the curricula of the two departments. It was one of the many small jerks forward (though our discontinuation of the course seemed like a loss at the time) which moved our program from then to now -- a minor episode of recognition that regular departments have a responsibility for meeting EOF students' needs and that their needs are, in fact, the same in kind as those other students have. This recognition was an important one in placing our program psychologically within the College -- still not a completed process, but close to it.

We have come a long way:

Now our academic component is a regular college department (Academic Foundations) which combines with counseling and financial aid to make up the complete program.

Now our courses carry college credit.

Now we function as a service to the entire college, and about one-third of the students we serve in Communication Skills are regularly admitted students placed with us or coming voluntarily for help.

The present shape of our program is probably the result more of the efforts of a series of single-minded and determined deans planning with our program director than it is the result of our faculty's wish to move into the academic mainstream. Certainly no one opposed credit for our courses, but many of us were suspicious or even hostile towards the idea of becoming a department with a chairman instead of, as before, being responsible to the program director, who is not a member of

the College faculty. We did not want to be dumped into a tenure stream. Though the University assured us that the special mission of our program would be respected in tenure decisions, we were skeptical and defensive. None of us had published. None had a doctorate. We thought we didn't want these things or at least we had no time for them. We saw the imposition of normal academic requirements for tenure as a way of killing us off. We became paranoid. But the administration ignored our protests. Kicking and screaming, we were read our rights and thrown into the tenure stream to sink or swim. Some sank, but the only Communication Skills member of the Department to go up for tenure so far received it and is now our Department Chairman. Of the five full-time Communication Skills faculty, one has a doctorate and one is in a doctoral program. There have been several publications. One might ask what all the fuss was about. To me it seems that our earlier defensiveness and self-imposed isolation resulted from our origins in under-dog programs of the sixties and that our increased professionalism is a healthy growth. Others may see it as a petrifactive phenomenon making flexible service to our students more difficult. In my view, we are now able to give more richly to our students and can show them by our stature as faculty and our college-wide service that our program is a respectable one with no cause to hide its face or defend itself. Students who have this perception are, it seems to me, helped in a very direct way in their efforts to control standard English.

They need not be ashamed. They can see their efforts as doing something for themselves, not as a response to a hostile requirement. The us-against-them philosophy of the sixties, though it had its origins in reality, can become distructive in slowing students down and encouraging them to settle for less than their best.

## THE COMPONENTS

What specifically are we offering our students? In our seventies' stance do we serve students and, without slighting them in the least, also serve the profession? The answer is yes. Our writing program has three components which together perform these two services. None is unique in itself, but they are unique in combination. They are: courses, Learning Center, and an annual workshop in the teaching of reading and writing in college.

Courses

The basic pre-101 sequence consists of three courses: Communication Skills 142, 143, and 144. The first two are considered as a unit. That is, a student may not start with 143, but he may, on the basis of a writing sample, place in 142 or in 144 when he enters college. Placement standards, which apply equally to regularly admitted students and EOF students, are nowhere defined in writing. Various attempts over the years to introduce evaluation scales and scoring devices based on number and kind of errors have been rejected as presenting nothing better than a nuisance and as being not applicable to the complexities of a human production. However, because the group of readers always contains a core of full-time personnel who talk to each other, the placements are strongly consistent. A maximum class size of fifteen (twelve for ESL) is on the books for communication skills courses but that figure is not fixed, of course, and larger

classes are common. Such small classes are considered by some in the Dean's Office to be unaffordable luxury, but fortunately this is not the prevailing sentiment.

The present form of the first course, Communication Skills 142-143 was developed in 1974. It is not a drastic departure from previous forms, but it was a response to the need for more consistency (an urgent consideration because of increasing numbers of part-time instructors) and to the need to provide more individualization. The course has proved very teachable and as measured by numbers of students moving directly from it into 101, skipping 144 and even 143 in some cases, it has proved very successful. In addition to carrying credit, it differs from many developmental writing courses in three important respects. First, it has a theme. It has proved somewhat difficult to exploit this fact with appropriate readings and discussions, but when it has worked a satisfying intellectual dimension has been added to the basic instruction. Second, the course has built-in individualization. One period a week is spent in the Learning Center, where students are tutored one-to-one or in small groups in the areas of their specific need. This has proved very valuable as a way of dealing with the range of skills levels in even the most homogeneous writing classes. Third, the course integrates reading and writing instruction. This has been true of all the basic communications courses in the Department since 1969 and it is a fact of which we are now proud despite the weight of pity, censure and guilt over the years. We do not believe in teaching reading as the product of sequentially developed

skills. We know that we didn't learn to read that way and we don't see why anyone else should. We took this position more out of instinct than knowledge but certainly the work of Moffett, Britton, Goodman and many others has given us ample scholarly justification. Our students do not need reading instruction per se. They need reading experience. To this end our course gives them plenty of reading and, we hope, a sense that reading and writing go together under the heading of what is uniquely human: language. Over the years we have discovered that many of the teaching devices we use to teach composition are teaching reading at the same time. Sentence combining, kernel expansion, and sector analysis work on the sentence level, and on the paragraph and theme level almost any method used to teach organization and development also improves comprehension. Teachers of basic writing no longer need to apologize for not having been trained to teach reading. We have been doing it all along.

Some excerpts from the syllabus will serve to give the flavor of the course and also some insight into the methodology we have found most effective.

Description and Rationale

> Communication Skills II (142-143) is a one-year, two-credit course designed to develop reading, writing, and study skills. It meets four periods a week, with one of these periods in the Learning Center, where each student receives individual attention for particular reading-writing needs.
>
> To give the course cohesion, the reading and writing is organized around a theme: Self. This theme was chosen as one which could readily tap student interest and which, more importantly, could lend itself to sharpening the student's perception of himself as a

unique human being with unique strengths and the ability to make contributions of interest and value to the general good. In a situation where the changing of language patterns and the development of new priorities can be very threatening, structuring to enhance self-image can be considered an essential part of the course.

To make easier a focus on several aspects of self and to encourage control of skills instruction leading to short-term goals, the course is divided into four sequential modules, each with its own thematic focus and skills content. The material in the modules becomes increasingly less personal, more abstract, heavier in concept, and more demanding in terms of vocabulary, organization, and complexity of independent thinking.

The course is not to be thought of as a cram course for the most rapid movement into English 101. Also, while it must and should deal practically with skills students need in courses they are taking concurrently, an important, and even primary, overall goal is the expansion of the student's view of his language. He will not only increase his vocabulary, and improve his grammar, organizational skills, and study habits. He will begin to understand the uses of language to control, delimit, and to extend; he will become more sensitive to style and grow in respect for the written word. He may even begin to discover his personal voice, and he will comprehend, even though he may not agree with, Wittgenstein's statement, "The limits of my language are the limits of my world."

## MODULE I

The first module is entitled Yourself. Its focus is on self-awareness through language and the use of language in description and the personal narrative. The primary reading and writing goal is increased fluency. Students should feel comfortable with both of these activities. They should understand that they have something of interest to say and can make it increasingly interesting through their control of language.

Reading-writing activities support this specific goal and the overall goals of the course:

- study of connotation and denotation
- study of the selection and ordering of details for the development of the controlling idea or point of view

- study of emphasis, beginnings, and endings
- introduction to different styles in writing
- practice in synthesis of ideas
- vocabulary development

Grammar activities revolve around sentence structure and related punctuation and aim toward self-editing.

Study skills activities revolve around a reading survey technique and basic memory and test-taking skills which are of immediate practical use to the student.

Readings are narrative and descriptive (fiction and non-fiction) and a group of articles on the nature of language. Writings are descriptions and narratives from personal experience.

MODULE II

The second module is entitled Yourself and Others. The focus is on developing awareness in the student of the nature of his own experience through comparison and contrast between it and that of others as described in personal essays. Structure is introduced as a means of organizing ideas for clarity in communication. Specific attention is given to the student's ability to identify subject matter, main idea and detail and differentiate among them.

Reading-writing activities (introduced so that students can see the connection between the new activities and the old) are:

- study of paragraph structure and development in several modes (listing, examples, comparison-contrast)
- study of the opening paragraph as introducer of a controlling idea
- study of later paragraphs as developers of the controlling idea

Grammar and study skills build upon the basis laid in Module I.

Readings are personal essays, each dealing with a familiar experience. In writing in response to these essays it is necessary for the student to understand the experience, and think about it sufficiently to be able to make comparisons and contrasts in writing. This much examination may be more than he has ever attempted and so the module presents a rather sturdy intellectual challenge.

## MODULE III

The third module is entitled Yourself and the World. The focus is on moving the student from direct personal experiences to more intellectual experience, that is, to thinking about abstract ideas presented in the readings. In this process he will be helped to see how these abstract ideas are related to his own life and also how the perceptions developed from his own life color his thinking.

Reading-writing exercises (again building on concepts introduced in Modules I and II) are:

- study of more complex ways of developing paragraphs
- study of various methods of overall organization

Students will write without the first-person pronoun. Emphasis is an increasing facility in development and organization.

Readings are essays, articles, and fiction, each dealing in some way with individual perception and its effects. In responding to these readings the student is required to examine the workings of his own perceptions and how they can restrict or liberate him. He has moved another step away from the directly personal and is dealing with abstractions.

## MODULE IV

Module IV is entitled Yourself and the World of Ideas. The module undertakes to pull together what the student has learned about language and focus it on critical analysis of the media.

Reading (or viewing) - writing exercises put knowledge already gained to work in analysis of what the media are communicating, to imitation of such communication, and to criticism of it.

Readings are in newspapers, magazines, speeches, etc. Viewings are TV and motion pictures. Students are required to develop strengths for dealing with the mind-control potential of the media and to exercise and demonstrate the use of critical judgment in writing.

* * *

Movement is structured into this course. The student has read at least thirty pieces of different lengths and increasing difficulty and has written at least twenty full-length papers and additional short paragraphs. At the year's end he has progressed from the simple narrative to the exercise of critical judgment. The sequential nature of the course has

made it possible for him to effect this growth in the ability to deal with abstractions. And, the interdependence of the modules has made it possible for him to perceive the continuum. He has become aware of the nature of the reading and the writing process and has thus acquired the most fundamental study skill of all. At this point, whether he moves to English 101 or to Communication Skills III for more polish and tightening, he has at his command insights into how language is used that will serve him in good stead in all his college work.

. . . . . .

Improvement rather than an absolute standard is the measure for evaluation at the end of this course. This is because students improve at widely varying rates and it would be a disservice to keep in 142 a student who needed a few more weeks or months than others. The Learning Center can provide the extra instruction he may need to catch up before the moment of truth, which must come at the end of 143.

. . . . . .

Suggested readings for faculty (available in the Learning Center):

Macrorie, Ken. Uptaught & Telling Writing. (for free writing method).

Southwell, Michael G. "Free Writing" (paper presented at the Writing Workshop of the Academic Foundations Department, April 3, 1976).

Judine, Sister M., editor. A Guide for Evaluation of Student Compositions. (especially articles beginning on pages 29 and 44).

Moffett, James. Teaching the Universe of Discourse. (especially the last three chapters).

Hayakawa, S. I. Language and Thought in Action.

Strong, William. Sentence Combining: A Composing Book.

O'Hare, Frank. Sentence Combining -- Improving Student Writing Without Formal Grammar Instruction.

. . . . . .

Suggested Teaching Methods

It is important to remember that without exception, the students will have had at best a few, but more likely many, unpleasant experiences in English classes. These will have ranged from

derogation of dialect through inexplicable red-penciling and seemingly pointless and confusing exercises, to mind-numbing boredom. They will be very inexperienced readers and will, for the most part, find reading a chore. Accordingly, teachers should never be embarrassed to utilize every conceivable technique to make the course interesting. Only if his interest is aroused from its deadened condition can we expect a student to begin to appreciate the possibilities inherent in language for expanding his life.

The following methods and techniques are suggested:

1. Free writing. See Macrorie and Southwell as described above.
2. X-word grammar. This is a process of discovery for the student and, among many valuable features, serves to show him how much he already knows about language. Information on the method and demonstration workshops are available in the Learning Center.
3. Sentence combining. This, like x-word grammar, is reading instruction as well as writing instruction and will help students to gain control of their sentences and improve their style. (See the books referred to above.)
4. Writing to an audience of peers and maximum involvement, in small groups, in the criticizing of writing.
5. Instruction in specifics based on the students' own work. No skills should be taught in a vacuum.
6. Limitation of red-penciling initially to responses to what the student is saying and later to those areas of grammar which have been dealt with in class.
7. Assignments structured to tap specific skills. Every effort should be made to make assignments interesting, new and pleasing, but we should not lose sight of the facts that the wording of the assignment has a very large effect on the product and that assignments can be structured to put the student through whatever process is desired at a particular stage.
8. Clarity from the beginning about the differences between written and spoken English and between dialect and standard English.
9. Determination and explanation of goals for the module, both group and individual, by the second week. Setting of goals requires careful diagnosis which should be based on at least two writing samples. Type and frequency of grammar errors should be noted, as well as problems of style,

> diction, and organization. Each recurring grammar error should be examined for consistency. For example, do all subject-verb agreement errors apparently stem from the intervention of prepositional phrases? Strict consistency is very common, and such a discovery may effectively reduce the number of items to be worked on, in class or the Learning Center, to quite manageable proportions, a welcome insight for student, teacher, and tutor.

Note: These suggested methods for Module I reflect a philosophy in teaching at this level. Therefore they may serve as a guide for activities in all modules.

Students who have not been placed in English 101 after the completion of 143, together with some regularly admitted students adjudged not ready for 101 on admission, go into Communication Skills 144. For obvious reasons, these students are not pleased to be there and so the course is a difficult one to teach. Tensions are heightened by the regulation that no student who does not pass the placement examination given by the English Department may pass the course. In order to make the course more palatable and give it more validity as an educational entity, there is stress on the practical application of reading-writing skills in other courses.

To quote from the syllabus

> Communication Skills 144 is a one-semester course in developmental reading and expository writing which has as its primary objective the preparation of students to pass the English Department's freshman composition placement examination and a complementary implicit objective of relating in-class skills work to the reading and writing of other beginning level college courses. . . . It actively encourages students to apply the procedures used in the course in all of their college work -- in reading, in writing, and in examinations. At base, in its concern with students applying skills to their courses generally, is the recognition that if students use the course skills only in

> Communication Skills 144, only a modicum of their reading and writing potential will be realized. The course, by design, points up the ties between reading and writing, using reading selections formally to stimulate writing and informally as models. . . .
>
> The course should not settle into being a composition course. It must maintain a strong, clear reading component. Such can be accomplished, in large measure, by tying writing to reading and by having students display in writing the results of classroom reading instruction and the students' individual involvement with reading assignments. Fundamentally, a student's writing must testify to his attending to the writer's message. The student must be able to function as a simple reporter, presenting the essential content of a reading selection -- the main ideas -- free of his own evaluative commentary. In short, he must make his ability to summarize the index of his ability to read for main ideas. . . .
>
> After the recommended reading lesson and the customary discussion have taken place so that the student can demonstrate that he knows what the author has presented and can see that he has something to say about the author's ideas, he should produce a simple sentence outline made up of his own thesis and four or five additional sentences that establish an opinion-reason relationship. He should write his thesis statement and then say, "This thesis is sensible. My readers should accept it, for the following reasons." Then he should actually write out the reasons as sentences. Each reason can become a topic sentence for a body paragraph.

The syllabus goes on to expand on this model for constructing an expository essay and suggests that the instructor encourage capable students to develop models of their own:

> . . . While many students will have to labor long to produce satisfactory papers, others will be able to move beyond this basic model and should be encouraged to do so. Such students will have demonstrated their understanding of the organizational principles illustrated in the model so that they can vary the presentation, retaining orderliness and clarity as they learn to impose

> their individuality on the writing and extend the range of their expression. Instruction can accomplish some of this, but competent students should be encouraged to make decisions on their own about all aspects of composing and be assisted, not dictated to, in their efforts to communicate.

When the student completes this course, satisfactorily or not, a number of options for his placement are open to the instructor. (While each Placement Examination is read by two instructors other than the student's, no final decision on placement is made without full consultation.) The options are: 1) The student may be required to repeat the course (usually only those who have been excessively absent or have made little effort), 2) he may be given an incomplete grade and be allowed to try again to pass the Placement after some tutoring in the Learning Center, 3) he may be allowed to repeat the course in the Learning Center in a one-to-one or small group tutorial, 4) he may be placed in English 101 Intensive (special sections of 101 which meet one extra period a week and are designed for those whose basic skills still need attention), 5) he may be placed in 101 Intensive with the stipulation that he sign up for at least one period a week of tutoring in the Learning Center, or finally 6) he may be placed in regular English 101.

This extraordinary number of options, which far surpasses those in any other program I know, demonstrates what is perhaps the greatest strength of our program: its flexibility. It was recognized long ago by our Department that Procrustean beds, while they may have their place in education at some

levels, will not serve in developmental courses. Students learn in different styles, by different methods, and in different lengths of time; because we have moved as steadily as possible, despite decreasing budgets, towards institutionalizing this knowledge, we have been rewarded with an increasing rate of success in college for our students.

* * * * *

The remaining two components of our program, the Learning Center and the annual reading-writing workshop, have both been developed as, among other things, ways of providing the most flexible learning situation possible.

The Learning Center

The Learning Center was set up in 1973 to make individualized instruction a reality for students in Communication Skills. As the EOF Director said in orienting the person hired to set up the Center, "We've been giving lip service for years to individualizing. But that's about all we've managed to do." The project got strong support within the Department and also from the Dean's Office, with the result that it started off well-staffed and equipped. This is no longer true, but we were able to set up a structure in relative luxury before the cuts came.

The staff consists at present of a director who also teaches, regular faculty giving an hour or two as part of their programs, one or two graduate assistants (money for them must be scrounged every semester) and a corps of undergraduate tutors. Basically, all of these people do the same work in the Learning Center. That is, they diagnose, prescribe, and teach one-to-one or at most one-to-three. When they have students who are coming as part of a class they work under the direction of the instructor, but for the most part tutors use their own judgment in planning their work.

This feature of the Learning Center seems loose. Certainly in the fifties it would have seemed much too loose. "You can't leave students alone to teach other students. It's the blind leading the blind." However, thanks to the leaven of the sixties, the teaching of writing can be seen as a communal effort. Their imagination thus challenged, tutors

accomplish prodigious feats with their students. Hopeless cases have been salvaged. As one bemused English 101 instructor told us, "I only referred those students that I knew were going to fail the course. They all passed. Now I urge almost all of my students to go the the Center." Under these circumstances, morale among the tutors is understandably high. Undergraduates are paid only the minimum wage, but they give ten times the value of their paycheck.

There is no doubt that these tutors can do for students, often, what faculty cannot. As one tutor said in her journal, "[Many students] are certainly capable of more than they imagine and need re-assurance. Perhaps this is a large part of a tutor's work -- creating a constructive climate of acceptance which instructors by their inevitable distance cannot. . . Mostly tutoring is trust."

But it is not only in the emotional support they can give that tutors are effective. We have found that their ready grasp of new methods and materials is a strength, but even more important is their willingness and ability to bring in methods and materials of their own. The Center is much richer for the ideas of several generations of tutors. The faculty treat the undergraduates as colleagues and each group learns from the other. The result of this fermentation is that the Center serves as a kind of clearinghouse of ideas about teaching and has been able to support the general use of such methods as sector analysis and sentence combining which, before the Center provided a central

operational basis could have been lost. The inability to institutionalize effective methodology, the regular re-invention of the wheel, is a condition that often plagues developmental programs. The Learning Center has protected us from that to a very large extent.

The undergraduate tutors are recruited by word of mouth and by faculty recommendation. Not all are English majors, but all have a pleasure in language and a wish to share this pleasure with others. Their training consists of assignment to the classroom of one or more faculty members when this is possible, assignment to an experienced tutor as a guide, and a series of regular meetings at which problems and methods are discussed. Faculty share their problems, too, and differences in status and role dissolve, with the result that the professional resources from which the student can benefit are greatly expanded.

The organization and administration of the Learning Center are idiosyncratic. It has been described as an "anarchic matriarchy". Not every program would want to support such an operation. However, many forms are possible. The idea of a peer tutoring component in a basic writing program is what is fundamental.

The Annual Reading-Writing Workshop

In 1975, partly out of dissatisfaction with the professional associations' failure to deal adequately with basic writing, and partly out of a desire to expand our professional horizons, the Department decided to mount a workshop of its own. It was to consist entirely of demonstration lessons.

There would be no papers read, and no exclusively theoretical presentations. Good teachers would teach lessons already proven effective. Those who had nver before presented their material to peers would be encouraged to participate, along with those whose names would be recognized.

Specifically, the goals would be:

1. to present material that would be immediately transferable to the classroom
2. to bring together people from developmental and regular writing programs so that they might discover and explore common aims
3. to provide a local, friendly forum in which first-presenters could feel as comfortable as seasoned hands
4. to cut into the isolation of the Academic Foundations Department and multiply its contacts with other programs.

We have now had three of these workshops and they have been impressive successes. Twenty-four colleges have presented demonstrations. Many presenters who were first-timers have gone on to present at major conferences. Publications have resulted. The Department has taken a new look at itself and rather liked what it found, with the result that our professional activity has enormously increased. We have been visiting conferences, workshops, seminars, other programs; we have entertained a stream of observers to our own program; we have been called as consultants. While in 1974-75 only one conference presentation

was made by a member of the Department, in 1978-79 there will be ten. Some attribute this expansion entirely to the impetus of our own Workshop.

Cynics not on the scene may have a special interpretation of all this activity. "The students have lost out again," I can hear them saying. "Faculty egos are getting fatter and teaching is getting thinner." Not so. The effect of cross fertilization has been striking. Tutors and faculty alike have expanded their repertoires. A rich reference file has been built up in the Learning Center. There has not been a single course left untouched by improvements discovered at our Workshop and in our travels.

I am not saying that every basic writing program needs to sponsor a workshop, but it seems clear that ours did and we now consider it an essential part of the program. It has achieved its goals and will go on achieving them and enriching them. It is one of the ways we organize to teach writing. Teaching writing has many ramifications. But who, in the fifties, would have realized them?

## THE FUTURE

If the seventies present a kind of consolidation of the eruptions of the sixties, what are we to expect of the eighties? Basic writing programs have developed impressive expertise and impressive contributions to the teaching profession. Should we rest on our hard-won laurels? Is there anywhere to go from here?

I think there is. I see our Department moving on three different but connected fronts. In this movement, or in the potential for it at least, we probably do not differ from many of the developmental programs which started about ten years ago.

1. We will, it seems likely, develop even further as a service department for the college at large. We have been fortunate in that the EOF Director was foresighted enough to understand that to save our life we needed to expand our services. Many of us did not want to expend our resources on aid to non-EOF students but we were persuaded to do so even when we had to expand class size temporarily. The gesture worked. We are now becoming accepted by many as an essential adjunct rather than deplored as an excrescence.
2. Along with this, a closer relationship between the Academic Foundations and the English Department seems a certainty for the future. One might say, "About time!" That, despite good will on both sides, the wedding took almost ten years to effect is an indication of the fact that in past years each

department viewed the goals of the other as somehow foreign. This attitude is changing and it seems probable that joint curriculum planning sessions will ultimately deal with the entire sequence of courses from Communication Skills 142 through English 102.

3. Still only a twinkle in a few eyes is the third activity I see in the future for the Academic Foundations Department. This is an effort, made with the English Department of course, to move language instruction out into the other disciplines. This may take any form from exhortation up to team teaching, but whatever the form, it will be difficult even with full cooperation of the faculty. It will not be impossible, though, because thanks to the experiences of the past decade, we now have the expertise.

Obviously, these projections for the future are rosy. I do not share the doom-saying of many professionals. I do not say that students are getting smarter, but they are certainly no worse off than they used to be. The truth is that it is the teachers who are getting smarter, quite literally, and it is this fact which will shape our program and others like it in the eighties.